

American International School, Dubai
Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Counselling Policy
Academic Year 2026-2027

Introduction

The American International School (AIS) in Dubai is committed to fostering an inclusive, nurturing, and supportive learning environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. In alignment with our inclusive philosophy and the American Curriculum, we recognize that mental health and wellbeing are integral to student success. This policy outlines our approach to promoting mental health, preventing mental health issues, and providing timely support and counselling services to students, staff, and families.

Terminology and Definitions

Mental Health: A state of well-being in which individuals recognize their abilities, cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community.

Wellbeing: A holistic concept encompassing physical, emotional, social, and psychological health.

Counselling: A professional, confidential process where trained counsellors provide guidance and support to individuals experiencing personal, social, or academic difficulties.

Safeguarding: Policies and practices to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable individuals from harm.

Early Intervention: Proactive identification and support for students who may be at risk of developing mental health issues.

Policy Statements

1. AIS will promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all members of the school community.
2. Mental health support and counselling services will be accessible to all students.
3. AIS will provide an environment where students feel safe to express concerns about their wellbeing.
4. Mental health will be embedded in the curriculum, staff training, and school culture.

5. Stigma related to mental health issues will be actively challenged.
6. Confidentiality will be respected in accordance with legal and ethical guidelines.
7. The school will collaborate with parents, healthcare professionals, and external agencies when necessary.

Plan of Action

Integrate mental health education into classroom teaching through age-appropriate lessons and discussions.

Provide individual and group counselling services on-site.

Offer regular staff training on mental health awareness and support strategies.

Conduct well-being activities and initiatives to promote resilience, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.

Implement early identification and referral pathways for students needing mental health support.

Establish a network of support between the school, families, and external mental health professionals.

Provide resources and workshops for parents to support their children's wellbeing at home.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Leadership (Principal, Vice-Principals):

- Oversee the development and implementation of the policy.
- Allocate appropriate resources to mental health and counselling services.

School Counsellors:

- Provide counselling services to students.
- Develop individual wellbeing plans where necessary.
- Liaise with parents and external specialists.
- Maintain confidentiality and professional standards.

Teaching Staff:

- Foster a supportive classroom environment.
- Identify and refer students showing signs of mental health concerns.
- Participate in mental health and wellbeing training.

Parents and Guardians:

- Communicate with the school regarding their child's mental health needs.
- Support and reinforce wellbeing strategies at home.

Students:

- Engage in wellbeing programs and counselling services.
- Seek help when needed and support peers appropriately.

Implementation Steps

1. Policy Dissemination: Share the policy with all staff, parents, and students via the school website, handbook, and orientation sessions.
2. Training:
 - Conduct annual mental health training for staff.
 - Provide specialized workshops for counsellors and leaders.
3. Program Development:
 - Integrate wellbeing themes into the curriculum.
 - Organize school-wide events promoting mental health.
4. Support Services:
 - Provide clear referral processes for staff and parents.
 - Offer confidential counselling sessions to students.
5. Collaboration:
 - Establish partnerships with external health professionals and agencies.
 - Develop parent education programs.

Policy Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually through:

Surveys of students, staff, and parents regarding wellbeing and mental health services.

Monitoring of counselling service usage and outcomes.

Regular review of referral rates, intervention success, and incident records.

Feedback from staff training sessions.

Updates based on new research, best practices, and legal requirements.